

# The Essayan Statue

An Audacious Hazard of Nikolai, Independent Agent, as Related by His Lieutenant, Summers  
By H. M. EGGERT

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I like to remember interludes in Nikolai's series of conspiracies and vengeance, when he allowed his subtle humor to play like a lambent flame about his imagination, when tragedy turned comedy and success was not purchased by tears. The case of the Essayan statue well illustrates the lighter side of Nikolai's nature.

Everybody in Boston came to know Essayan after he formed the famous combination in corn. He must have made millions; and from the humble post of editor of a little revolutionary Armenian sheet, he became one of the city's leading bankers. Simultaneously his views underwent a change, as Nikolai discovered when he called on him.

"What?" shouted Essayan. "Contribute fifty thousand dollars to the revolutionary party? You must be crazy."

"Six months ago," said Nikolai thoughtfully, "you were hawking for vengeance upon Russia through the columns of your newspaper, and begging subscriptions from your Armenian compatriots against the tyrant of your country."

Essayan stroked his paunch, chuckling. "Maybe I did," he admitted. "But now I am a millionaire. My views have changed."

Nikolai looked round. We were seated in Essayan's private museum, to which he stored his statues. Essayan had gone in for culture. His collection must have been worth millions. Treasures of Greece and Rome adorned his galleries; there was an original Venus of Praxiteles, a Hermes by Phidias; bas-reliefs and friezes had been stripped for the banker from many an ancient temple. Nikolai frowned angrily.

"You must have spent five millions on that collection of yours," he said. "Twelve millions," said Essayan suavely. "And all old, broken things at that. They tell me that my Hermes hadn't a head. They tell me that they're just as valuable when every statue has some part missing. I don't understand it myself—but they cost twelve millions."

Nikolai led him on to talk of his new hobby. It was evident that the Armenian took only a shadowy interest in the art side of his collection. He did not, in fact, remember whether it was his Apollo that had the missing arm or his Jupiter whose leg was gone. "But Berg knows," said the banker. "Berg's my art expert in London, and what he says goes. He's sending me a sample of old Egyptian mummies that's going to cost me half a million."

"Now, Mr. Essayan," said Nikolai. "If you can spare twelve millions for your confounded art hobby you can give me fifty thousand for the Armenian cause."

"I'll wager you that before the year is out I'll sell you one of your own statues out of this gallery for three times the amount I've asked you."

"No, you won't," answered the banker placidly, "because I know you, and from this moment my museum's going to be bolted and barred and guarded, and nobody's going to enter. See?"

Nikolai could with difficulty restrain his indignation when we were outside. "The selfish hog!" he muttered. "He spends twelve millions on that stuff when fifty thousand would rebuild those villages that the Russians burned last year, leaving hundreds of his countrymen homeless. Well, Summers, we'll win three times that amount and teach the scoundrel a lesson."

"Nikolai," I said, "I confess that breaking into a banker's house in Boston does not appeal to me. It isn't feasible. This is America, and what can be done in Europe won't go here."

"I'll do the breaking in," said Nikolai. "Or, rather, I shall be carried into the gallery in state and requested to spend the night there alone by Mr. Essayan. All you will be required to do will be to catch the statue in a blanket when I throw it out."

I knew that some audacious scheme had already been devised by my companion, but Nikolai refused to deliver himself of it. The year had several months to run and for two months we did nothing, except occasionally to wander in the neighborhood of the banker's house. Once we encountered Essayan as he was leaving his front door.

"Ha!" he snorted. "When are you going to sell me my own statue, what?" He led us back into the house. "Look!" he said. "You shall be warmly welcomed, gentlemen."

"I'm not doing this for fun," I answered, with feigned anger.

He watched me for a while and then resumed his patrol of the house. The moment that he disappeared I sprang from under the machine, seized the blanket and heaved myself to the floor.

"Broken down?" he inquired sympathetically.

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This plan I carried into effect. The banker was in the country, I had learned, and the house deserted. It would be the easiest matter to accomplish my scheme. Soon after midnight I drove up toward Essayan's house. I duly stopped the machine, uttered an exclamation of anger, descended, and barrowed into the ground beneath it. As I had anticipated, the watchman paused on his round.

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Soon we should be compelled to half. Multitudes took up the chase. We turned off along the Common, shot across the grass, and sped along the deserted glades beneath the old trees; and all the while the policeman followed us, riding now behind, now at our sides. We could not shake him off.

"Let her go, Summers," he cried, and, even as he spoke, the watchman came back before his time and in an opposite direction. He had evidently suspected something. One glance at Nikolai was sufficient for his suspicions to leap into full activity. He snatched a whistle from his neck and placed it to his lips.

Before he could blow Nikolai had seized him by the throat and grasped his hands. "Into the auto with him, Summers," he cried in a low, penetrating whisper. "Give a hand."

"Now let her go," Nikolai cried. "Hurry, man."

And then a lamentable aspect of our situation made itself manifest. The automobile had actually broken down. I had disarranged the gear in some manner. It would not stir. No sound came from the engine.

"Crank her, crank her," cried Nikolai, still struggling with the watchman, whose powerful strength was almost a match for his own. "Here! Take him and I'll start the engine."

He forced him into my arms and

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"NOT A PENNY" ANSWERED ESSAYAN.

corner. I pretended to be very busy with the machine. He halted for a moment, glanced at me, and again resumed his beat.

But why was Nikolai cutting up the statue piecemeal?

The next object that came down to me was a single hand. I looked up; I thought I saw Nikolai smiling. The situation was an absurd one.

"Don't cut it up so fine," I whispered. I do not know whether he heard. A single finger next came down; but an instant later I was staggering under the weight of a torso and the hind part of a head, which seemed to me to be the complimentary piece of the first one that had descended. Again I sought the safety of the bottom of the automobile.

The watchman paused so long this time that I thought best to crawl out. "It's the carburetor," I explained, with a very dim understanding of the meaning of the term. "And I think my spark plug's fouled. Do you know of any repair shop in the neighborhood?"

"Not at this time of the night," answered the watchman, gloating, as it seemed to me, over my misfortune. This was his revenge for my previous reception of his sympathetic inquiries. "Oh, well, I'll start the blamed thing somehow," I answered, and began fumbling the mechanism again.

He passed on upon his beat and I looked up to Nikolai. A fore-arm came whizzing through the air; an arm; a second leg; then the greater part of a trunk; finally two ears. And then, as I still waited, I saw Nikolai perched upon the window sill. I motioned him back and crawled beneath the automobile again.

This time the watchman hardly looked at me. When he was gone I bundled

leaped out again. The moment that he had left the automobile my antagonist disengaged himself with ease and blew a shrill, prolonged blast up on his whistle. A moment later I heard the thump of a policeman's nightstick upon the pavement, two or three blocks away.

The watchman's strength was more than mine. The only fortunate circumstance was that as yet he had not seen the broken pieces of the statue in the tonneau. In front, Nikolai was cranking furiously. The watchman called and shouts re-echoed from the street. Then the engine began to chug and Nikolai leaped in, just as the watchman gained the street.

A policeman had darted up and, as the wheels began to move, he grasped my collar. I shook him off. We left him and the watchman behind. A moment later we were traversing the street at full speed and congratulating ourselves that we had shaken off our pursuers. We were premature. I heard a chug, chug, chug behind us.

As I turned my head, I saw the policeman leap upon the watchman's motorcycle and shoot in our direction.

Now followed a pretty chase. The motor-bicycle was as swift as the automobile. Time and again the policeman caught us; but one turn of the wheel and our huger bulk turned in upon him dangerously, threatening to shake him from his perch. He whistled all the while. Crowds came pouring out of side streets. Once he drew Nikolai and his coffin upon the ground in his direction caused a slight collision, and, in saving himself, our pursuer lost his weapon. By now we were speeding through Boston's streets, the city streets, which were as light as day and filled with theater crowds.

He purchased for Essayan. You can't sell him the same again."

Nikolai laughed. "My dear Summers, perhaps I should have initiated you into the whole secret at the beginning," he said. "Well, I will do so now." And then he told me.

His story began with his arrival at the custom house. After what seemed an immeasurable period in the obscurity of his case he found himself lifted upon a cart and conveyed to Essayan's house. The banker had left a deputy in charge while he was away, a shrewd fellow who was instructed to admit nobody to the museum under any pretext at all. So well did he fulfill his instructions that he dismissed the carrier and, with the aid of the watchman, carried the supposed mummy into the museum, with much undoing of bolts and bars. He placed Nikolai and his coffin upon the ground in the mummy room and retired, chuckling over his shrewdness.

After waiting till evening, to assure himself that he would not be disturbed, Nikolai opened the case and emerged.

Cautiously he explored the chamber. He found that it opened into the house by means of an unlocked door. Clearly the banker did not apprehend attack from within; and for the safety of his house he trusted his watchman. Nikolai's first act was to discover the upper window from which he could get into touch with me. His second was to rearrange the contents of the mummy case, so that, when it was opened, the absence of any body would arouse suspicion of trickery on the dealer's part rather than suggest that it had been used as a medium for burglary. Having done this Nikolai entered the statue gallery.

"I had already formed my scheme."

Preferred to Deliver It Himself. Henry J. Waters, president of the Kansas State Agricultural college, tells of a young man who was collecting funds for a benevolent institution. He attempted to collect a dollar from an old man who was noted for his closeness. The youth approached the old man and stated his mission and asked for a dollar, saying he was collecting for the Lord.

"Collecting for the Lord?" asked the old man. "Well, young man, how old are you?"

Wanted Postage. Frequently in the cities, according to the post office authorities, letters are held up because they have been stamped with foreign postage. Apparently many newcomers to this country, through ignorance, use their own country's stamps when they first arrive. But the mail doesn't get past the first sub-post office. The letters are held for postage.

Summers," he said, "but what struck me at once was the very mutilated condition of Essayan's statue. Hardly a one but lacked some member of the body. And then I remembered Essayan's comment upon this fact, and how he had boasted that he did not know one from the other—knew only that he had paid out twelve million dollars for them."

"Now, this was my scheme. I did not intend to steal a statue. I planned to steal parts of several statues; to chop a leg from one that had two legs, an arm from one that had two arms; a torso from a statue that was otherwise complete; fingers and legs and ears and other members to make up my complete art object."

"Summers, my plan succeeded beyond expectation. I have robbed Essayan of an entire statue; yet so skillfully has it been done that the ignorant fool will never discover that he has lost anything."

To this the papers bore witness on the following day. I call this extract from the Boston Record-Mirror.

"A daring robbery was attempted last night at the house of Mr. Essayan, the well-known banker. The thieves made their appearance in an automobile, and had almost succeeded in effecting an entrance when they were surprised by the night watchman. A desperate struggle followed, but the night watchman having foiled their attempt to kidnap him in their machine, succeeded in drawing his whistle and in warning the police. Officer 2270 gave chase upon his motor-cycle and followed the burglars as far as the Common, when he was struck by some missile and felled unconscious. The thieves succeeded in escaping and so far have not been traced, though it is thought that the identity of at least one of them is known to Mr. Essayan—who had, in fact, been led to expect just such an attempt. It is believed that Mr. Essayan's art gallery was the object of the attempt. However, a careful examination by Mr. Essayan revealed the fact that the gallery was never entered."

A month later Nikolai and I were in London, in the guise of art agents from the Levant. We interested Mr. Berg in our new statue.

"Dug up near Candia, Crete," said Nikolai, in broken English. "The mutilated condition is ascribed to the fact that the statue was demolished and buried by an earthquake about the time of Augustus."

"It has been pieced together creditably," said Berg, examining it with extraordinary interest. "A truly remarkable piece of work. I should say that it had been made experimentally by one versed in the various schools of the civilized world about the time of Christ. Other statues, for instance, show the influence of some special school, but this head seems to have been modeled after the school of Phidias; here we have one leg of contemporary Cretan sculpture and its fellow Roman work. Possibly a composite, prepared by pupils in the local school. As a curiosity it should be of vast interest; but I am not prepared to offer an exorbitant amount. How much do you want for it?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars, American," Nikolai answered.

"Call it a hundred and fifty thousand and I'll purchase it," said Berg.

Nikolai agreed reluctantly.

"By the way," he continued, when Berg had signed in Essayan's name, "is that the Mr. Essayan who received the mysterious empty mummy case last month, as reported in the art papers? I think I have a clue to the sender. Tell him to look inside and find whether there is not something written in English upon a piece of papyrus."

"MATTERS TO PONDER OVER  
Some Timely Thoughts That Will Be Found Worth More or Less Consideration."

I like to talk about the "good old times" once in awhile, but I believe the new times are better. Compare the comforts of life and the facilities for carrying on farm work of the present day with those of 25 years ago and you will agree with me, I think. We are living in the best time and in the best country the world ever saw, but some of us have not yet found it out.

You can almost tell what kind of a farmer he is by the rattle of his mowing machine. The best kept machinery makes the least noise.

Too many of us believe in co-operation of the kind that means: You help me and I'll help myself.

The man who can afford to dress his wife and daughter comfortably and well and does not is a sorry sort of a fellow.

God made woman's body the most beautiful thing on earth and he intended that it should be properly clothed and cared for.

Many a boy's heart has been hurt and his disposition soured by senseless and thoughtless criticism of his personal appearance and manners. The young heart is always sensitive to ridicule—the cruellest weapon that can be used—and it should never be directed against a boy or girl. Recollections of undeserved and thoughtless ridicule of dress, the result of poverty, 40 years ago, causes the blood to rush to our own faces to this day.—C. M. S.

Method of Trapping Eagles. Every year thousands of Chinese go into Mongolia to catch eagles to use for furs. Tame eagles carried on their shoulders are used as decoys when certain spots are selected for the baiting of nests with Ken-yu or small fish. Other eagles then join the tame ones, and the nests are raised by the trappers.

"I am twenty-five," answered the young man.

"Well, I am seventy-five years old, and as you are only twenty-five years old I think that I will get to see the Lord sooner than you. I will hand him the dollar myself."—Kansas City Star.

Relic Highly Valued. A handkerchief formerly belonging to Richard Wagner, and a dedication to the composer's bride embroidered on it, was sold for \$750 at Munich.

"Where did the phrase 'The longest way round is often the shortest way home' originate?"

"I don't know," replied the man with a motor. "Probably with a traffic policeman."

Parental Pride. "So your youngest baby has learned to walk!" said the admiring relative. "Walk, nothing!" exclaimed the fond parent. "Some of the steps it takes look exactly as if it were inventing a new fancy dance."

## BURIED TREASURES

Some Strange Tales of Hidden Gold and Jewels.

Pirates' Loot Is Elusive, But Not a Few Have Dreamed of Digging Spanish Doubloons From the Earth—Only Dreams.

What child is there who cannot recall hearings at mother's knee stories of buried treasures. And what child has not dreamed of digging from the damp, dark earth Spanish doubloons or golden nuggets? Nor were they in childish fancy tainted, though hid by some swashbuckling pirate who roved the main with plank ever set for luckless seafarers who came his way, the Kansas City Star states.

Down the generations has come the story of one who took his talents and buried them, and there is nothing to disprove the theory that he then but conformed to common custom.

A farmer digs a well, the drill strikes metal, and a pot